

February 17, 1978.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

SUBJECT: Questions & Answers Summary-February 14

Speech lasted from 5:50 to 6:21 p.m. and was followed by question and answer session from 6:22 to 6:50 p.m. The session was not recorded. Todman delivered text as written. The reconstruction of the question and answer period is based on sketchy notes taken at the time by Luigi Einaudi. It has not been reviewed by Assistant Secretary Todman.

The first question, asked by James Himes of the Ford Foundation, who acted as moderator, referred to human rights. ~~What was Todman's overall judgment of our human rights policy? What were its successes or failures? Todman answered that we could not take credit for what happens elsewhere. The decisions made by other people about their lives were their own.~~ Nor could it be said that this Administration had invented human rights, in many cases it had built on things begun during the previous administration. In his judgment, however, ~~the new emphasis on human rights had awakened the conscience of peoples throughout the world to the importance of basic human values and rights. This new consciousness and the knowledge that we cared, in turn, led people to exert greater pressure on their own governments to meet basic international standards.~~ Prisoners had been released, conditions had improved in many countries, some were even scheduling elections and taking other steps to restore democratic procedures. In sum, though we could not take credit for any particular action, Todman concluded that the Carter Administration's policies had been a catalyst leading to significant improvements in human conditions.

The second questioner said that all sounded very nice but we should see how things turned out in hard situations. He asked for information on current situation and US policy with respect to Nicaragua,

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

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noting that it was time for us to take a stand. Todman answered that our position in favor of democracy in Nicaragua was clear and that two things were essential to progress: avoiding fresh acts of violence, and ensuring that the government and the many groups of the opposition engaged in a real dialogue. Todman added that the US could not move in to impose any particular solution, but that neither could we opt out of the world. We hoped that an evolution toward greater democracy would take place. Asked how we intended to do this, Todman answered that we were encouraging both government and opposition to talk. Pressed again, Todman simply said "we have spoken to both sides".

The third questioner asked why we were allowing our relations with Brazil to deteriorate? For example, why had senior Treasury officials recently made such harsh statements singling out Brazil on trade protectionism? Todman said he did not know about the specific Treasury statements referred to but noted that the relations between the United States and Brazil were certainly good enough to allow each side to make its views known clearly to the other. He noted that the Administration had reaffirmed the Memorandum of Understanding with Brazil and that working groups and discussions at both the ministerial and sub-ministerial levels had met frequently, engaging in a broad dialogue on all major issues.

The fourth questioner started with the proposition that the "violent and bloody record of the Somoza dictatorship" meant it was "charming but unrealistic to think of talking". Implying that the Sandinistas were the only legitimate opposition, this questioner suggested the US make clear we would welcome Somoza's overthrow by issuing a public statement now that we would recognize any successor regime. Todman answered that we would face that question when it arose. He noted, however, that the Sandinistas were the only group that had appealed to violence. Realistically, Todman continued, Chamorro's tragic death should not be allowed to overshadow the fact that plans for a dialogue, in which Chamorro himself had been involved, had begun to be made before the strike. We hoped this dialogue could now take place in ways that would enable Nicaragua to move toward democracy without bloodshed.

The fifth questioner asked whether Todman was thinking of any specific examples when he noted the tactics that should be avoided in promoting human rights. Was he thinking, for example, of certain UN resolutions or specific countries where he felt we had made mistakes? Ambassador Todman answered that he was not referring to any specific past actions, but merely identifying signposts for the future. The fact that as you drive along you see speed limit signs does not imply that you are speeding, merely that you have identified a constraint.

The next questioner said that Todman's list of points to avoid was certainly an impressive list of New Year's Resolutions but asked whether, in fact, there was any indication that our performance would improve in the future. How could Todman, for example, reconcile silence on Iran with pressure on Argentina and Brazil? Ambassador Todman answered that it was true that there were sometimes difficulties in interpreting our policies, but he insisted that our policy on human rights was universal and that the appearance of contradictions was caused by the use of different tactics in the face of different situations rather than any selectivity in purposes.

The same questioner responded angrily that this was hard to accept in the light of our behavior on the German-Brazilian Accord, saying that our frontal and public attack might have limited the effectiveness of our policy and was in any case an example of a double standard in US policy. Ambassador Todman answered that there had indeed been some initial difficulties on the way in which our differences with Brazil on nuclear policy had been presented. He noted, however, that Brazil was participating actively in the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation Studies and that he was confident that both sides were cooperating constructively to bridge their differences.

The next questioner, Mr. Small from the International Press Service, then made a virtually incomprehensible commentary implying that British activities on Belize, the Beagle Channel dispute and Panama suggested that our communications with the British were not very good and that the British might, in

effect, be destabilizing US interests in Latin America. Todman answered that he thought we were in very good and cooperative contact with the British, and added that the British were actively seeking a solution to the Belize impasse in accordance with the desires of the people of Belize.

The next questioner wanted Todman to comment on reports from intelligence sources that Russian pilots were flying Cuban planes in Cuba to free Cuban pilots to fly Russian planes in Ethiopia. Ambassador Todman said that he was not an intelligence source.

The next questioner asked what our position was with regard to tensions between Argentina and Chile. Ambassador Todman said we had been in touch with both sides and were urging them to resolve their problems, if necessary through the OAS.

A Brazilian girl challenged Todman on the sophistication of the US public. Wasn't it true that in fact the US public doesn't understand the problems of Latin America and that Todman's Carterite emphasis on values and views of the American public was just so much smoke. Ambassador Todman answered by saying that he thought the American public had a good deal more common sense than she seemed to be willing to give it credit for. In fact, he continued, he thought that the American public was tired of traditional East-West oversimplifications and even of the newer trilateralist versions which added Europe and Japan but continued to exclude the southern half of the globe. The American public, said Todman, would welcome leadership that turned its face slightly southward and he said the press had a great deal of responsibility to help draw out the common sense of the American people by informing them more broadly about Latin America and the important achievements of its countries.

The next questioner, evidently a European, leapt up and said Todman should "tell the pols" and then lapsed into a generally incoherent account of the conflict between the politicians and the soccer fans in The Netherlands, who were squabbling over whether the Dutch should participate in the World Cup in Argentina. Todman did not comment.

// yeah

Time was running out, and Moderator Himes asked for a last question. A girl who identified herself as a Brazilian-born New Yorker married to an American said that for the record she was upset and considered it an act of discrimination that Todman had failed to list a Brazilian writer among the cultural giants.


Moderator Heims concluded the session by saying that relations would certainly be much better if everyone had a better understanding of what was going on and that he was very grateful to Ambassador Todman for his efforts to enlighten the group.

A cocktail, dinner, and informal, off-the-record discussion without press followed. Highlights included:

- Concern from Al Stepan of Yale that our stance on Cuba in Africa might return us to Cold War policies in Latin America.
- A comment from Bill Carmichael of the Ford Foundation that he hoped more senior Administration officials would speak out on the dilemmas caused by reductions of aid to middle income countries.
- A Morgan Guaranty Trust appeal for more US help to Peru.
- General praise for Todman's performance as Assistant Secretary, even from Bill Rogers.
- The charge by Robert Bond of the Council on Foreign Relations that the Administration's priorities on Panama, human rights and the Caribbean tended to ignore the real problems:
  - Mexico (illegals)
  - Brazil (nuclear)
  - Venezuela (oil prices)
  - Peru (economic crisis - implications for democracy)
  - Argentina

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Box 7

Human Rights